

Name _____ Date _____

Declaration of Independence: Student Worksheet

Answer the following questions using the *Declaration of Independence*.

Preamble

1. What was the purpose of the *Declaration of Independence*? (Paragraph 1)

The purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to explain the reasons why the colonists wanted to break free from rule under the British government.

Declaration of Natural Rights

2. Identify the three natural or unalienable rights of individuals. (Paragraph 2)

- a. Life
- b. Liberty
- c. The pursuit of happiness

3. According to the *Declaration of Independence*, from whom do governments get their power? (Paragraph 2)

Governments get their power from the people. Since all people have the rights listed in question 2 (the unalienable rights), people agree to form governments to protect their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

4. According to the *Declaration of Independence*, what should people do when the government abuses its power? (Paragraph 2)

When government violates the natural or inalienable rights of its citizens, it is the citizens' duty to abolish the government and create a new one.

List of Grievances

5. List 5 of the grievances by colonist that are identified in the *Declaration of Independence*. (Hint: There are a total of twenty-eight.)

Some possible answers include that the King:

- a. Refused to approve laws when they were needed
- b. Forbid Governors to pass laws until the King approved them, and he ignored these requests for new laws
- c. Refused to pass laws for the people unless they gave up their right to representation in Parliament
- d. Tried to control colonial legislatures, including closing some (Massachusetts)
- e. Made colonial legislatures meet in uncomfortable surroundings
- f. Prevented the election of new legislators when other he dissolved existing ones.
- g. Obstructed justice by refusing to have a judiciary
- h. Refused to let settlers move west
- i. Prevented justice by making judges dependent upon the king for their jobs and pay
- j. Sent officers (custom officials) to harass the people.
- k. Quartered armed troops

- l. Protected his troops from being held accountable for crimes against the colonists
- m. Took away charters and abolished colonial laws
- n. Made his military independent and superior to civil power
- o. Cutting off trade by blockading colonial ports
- p. Taxed colonists without representation in Parliament
- q. Deprived colonists of trials with a jury
- r. Waged war against the colonists by robbing ships and attacking and burning towns
- s. Hired of soldiers to fight in the colonies
- t. Forced internal revolts in the colonies

6. Locate a grievance that refers to each of the following:
Proclamation of 1763 **Refused to let settlers move west**

Quartering Act **Quartered armed troops**

7. How did the framers claim to have already tried to address the complaints?

By sending him letters of complaints

Declaration of Independence:

8. What will change in the colonies as a result of the Declaration?
A new government will be formed and will be free of rule from the King

The Signatures

9. List any signers that you recognize.

10. Why, in your opinion, did the men want to include their signatures on the document? Were there any dangers they were facing by signing their names?